



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN

This summer we have had hot temperatures, wind, and very few rain showers; leaving our soil as hard as rocks!

Rocks and stones play a large part in our life – Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse, and beautiful memorials for our veterans. For some of us, we have stones in our fields, our landscaping and in our prairies. There are agates in every pile of stones.

These rocks are right in front of our faces and yet without picking up each one, we do not notice all of them.

Much like our journey at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, we are in search of the gems/stones we call veterans.

It is important that we help our veterans move ahead, live life to the fullest, reintegrate into their communities and have access to high quality benefits and services in a timely, consistent, and equitable manner. It is important that we help them establish a “new normal” in family relationships, wellness, and financial stability.

Help us acquire the tools to provide care, services, and final tributes for our heroes.

Help us be as responsive to our youngest veterans as we are to our oldest veterans.

Help us to return functionality to the men and women wounded in service.

Help us guide our veterans to the resources that can help them and their families.

Help us leave no stone unturned.

Encourage your veteran to contact the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (605.773.3269) or their local county or tribal veterans service officer.



Inside this issue:

State ALA President Homecoming	2
Davison County Update	2
VA Extends Eligibility for Grant Program	3
SDDVA Staff Attend Training	3
Veterans to Receive ROC Medal	4
Black Hills Veterans March	4
Women Veterans Art Exhibit	5
VA Accountability Authorities	6
Wall that Heals	6
Upcoming Events	7

SD AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY STATE PRESIDENT' CELEBRATES HOMECOMING



SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Swanson attended the Homecoming celebration for State American Legion Auxiliary President Elvira Moen in Watertown.

Family, friends and Legionnaires gathered in Watertown to celebrate President Moen's new role. Rod Martens served as emcee for the celebration and Melanie Martens, past president, passed the auxiliary banner from past to present.

Moen will spend this next year traveling the state to continue to grow the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.



KUDOS TO DAVISON COUNTY VSO TEAM FOR SUPPORTING THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY

The Davison County Veterans Service Office has a legacy of conducting outreach, but this last week they stepped up and supported their local community in growing their food pantry and as such, they volunteered to compete in Coburn's Crazy Cart Race. During this highly competitive community program, they competed in four different categories and even stepped up and took a pie in the face. A big shout out to Debbie and Jessica for supporting their local community.

Jessica and Debbie have also secured headstones for a WWI Veteran and a Spanish American War Veteran and will be honoring these two heroes on October 9.



ONE-YEAR EXTENSION GIVES GROUPS TIME TO IMPROVE PROGRAM

United States Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David J. Shulkin announced an extension of funding to organizations that applied for Fiscal Year 2018 grants under VA's Homeless Providers' Grant and Per Diem Program, but would be found ineligible due to new program guidelines.

The extension will give those organizations a chance to improve the effectiveness of their programs and an opportunity to apply for funding under an upcoming "notice of funding."

In a Dec. 23, 2016, Federal Register notice, the VA announced it would end per diem payments for all grantees that received awards from the VA for fiscal years 1994 to 2016, and that all interest-ed grant programs would have to reapply under updated requirements and acceptance criteria included in the notice. The change allows the VA to update its two-decades-old program, which relied on transitional housing for homeless veterans, to one that equips homeless veterans with what they need to find permanent housing and independence.

"Our previous Grant and Per Diem Program offered veterans temporary shelter," Dr. Shulkin said. "We want our veterans to have a permanent home. To do that, our homeless programs staff is dedicated to making sure the services and grants we provide to prevent veteran homelessness are appropriate and based on current needs and approaches."

A letter will be sent shortly to programs affected by the new guidelines. The letter will provide a randomly generated number, so applicants may review their score in relation to the scores of all other applications, while offering them a one-year extension that allows them to continue operations and improve their application for future Grant and Per Diem Program funding. The Fiscal Year 2018 Grant and Per Diem Program awards to successful grantees will be made in September.

Information about the Grant and Per Diem Program may be found at <https://www.va.gov/homeless/GPD.asp>. Information about the changes to the program may be found [here](#). Information about VA's homeless programs is available at www.va.gov/homeless.

SDDVA STAFF ATTENDS NATIONAL ACCREDITATION TRAINING

SDDVA Field Officer Will Huffmon and SDDVA State Veterans Service Officer Erin Bultje attended the VFW National Veterans Service Skill Level Training program in Annapolis, MD, this week.

SDDVA continues to send staff to national training to ensure that the department and our partners are working within the ever changing guidelines from the federal programs.



REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN) TO HONOR AMERICAN VETERANS WHO SERVED IN TAIWAN

Republic of China (Taiwan) will honor 52 South Dakota veterans who served in Taiwan during 1955-1979 at a ceremony hosted by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. The ceremony will be held Monday, Aug. 14, at 1 p.m. (CST) in Galleries B & C at the Ramkota Conference Center in Pierre.

On behalf of the Republic of China (ROC) government, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Denver will present the "US-ROC Mutual Defense Commemorative Badge" to express the country's appreciation for their service and contributions.

The United States of America and the Republic of China established a Mutual Defense Treaty from 1955 to 1979, which defended Taiwan's democracy and freedom. Director General Jerry Chang said, "The American soldiers played a very important role in maintaining the peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait during that time and we are very grateful for all the veterans' contributions to providing assistance in Taiwan's self-defense. Taiwanese people will always remember with deep appreciation."

"It has been an honor to work side by side with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office on this ceremony," said Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "They recognize what these heroes have given and as a token of their sincerest appreciation they will present them with the US-ROC Mutual Defense Commemorative Badge which symbolizes their adoration and appreciation for their service and sacrifice."

"This is a conflict not many remember, and few even know about," said Zimmerman. "We must continue to provide opportunities like this ceremony to educate all on the sacrifices made by those who serve."

The ceremony will include remarks from Gov. Dennis Daugaard, SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman and Director General Jerry Chang.



Sept. 23, 2017

To learn more about the Black Hills Veterans March—visit <http://blackhillsveteranmarch.com/>



WOMEN VETERANS ART EXHIBIT OPEN HOUSE

September 13, 2017
4:00 PM - 6:30 PM

ELKS LODGE

600 E. KEMP AVE.
WATERTOWN, SD

For additional info, call Brenda Fredericks at
605-336-3230, Ext. 9-6250.

Sponsors: Sioux Falls VA Health Care System,
Center for Women Veterans, Veteran Artists
Program, Veterans Canteen Service, and First
Data

Refreshments provided by Al Janzen, Codington County Veterans Service Officer



MSPB FORCES THE VA TO TAKE BACK FIRED OFFICIAL, VA EXPLORING ALL OPTIONS UNDER NEW ACCOUNTABILITY AUTHORITIES

On August 2, the Vice Chairman of the federal Merit System Protection Board ordered a stay of the VA's removal of the former director of the Washington, D.C. VA Medical Center.

MSPB's stay order requires the VA to return Brian Hawkins, fired on July 28, to work pending the Office of Special Counsel's review of Hawkins' claim that he was wrongly terminated.

The VA has complied with the order and returned Hawkins to the payroll, but to an administrative position at the VA headquarters in Washington rather than to a patient-care position at the VA Medical Center.

"No judge who has never run a hospital and never cared for our nation's veterans will force me to put an employee back in a position when he allowed the facility to pose potential safety risks to our veterans," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "Protecting our veterans is my most important responsibility."

The stay order came one day after the VA Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) issued a new report finding that Hawkins violated VA policy by sending sensitive VA information from his work email to unsecured private email accounts belonging to him and his wife.

The VA will quickly make an assessment of Mr. Hawkins' employment using the new evidence and armed with the new authorities recently provided by the VA Accountability Act signed into law by President Trump in June.



SDPB presents

THE WALL THAT HEALS

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL REPLICA & MOBILE EDUCATION CENTER

A PROGRAM OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND
FOUNDERS OF THE WALL

Opening Ceremonies begin at 10am, August 10th

THE WALL THAT HEALS IS COMING TO CHAMBERLAIN
AUGUST 9-13*, 2017
 located at the Information Center/Rest Area at Chamberlain (Exit 264)
 *Closes Sunday at 4pm.

Upcoming Events

Aug 10-13—The Vietnam Wall—I-90 Information Center—Chamberlain
Aug 14-17—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre—Ramkota
Aug 16—Sioux Falls VA Show and Shine—VA Parking Lot—5:30 pm (CT)
Aug 16—Screening of the Vietnam War Documentary—Ramkota—Pierre - 6:00 pm (CT)
Aug 31—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair
Sept 2—DAV and 727th 13th Annual Poker Run—Brookings
Sept 8 NCPVA Pistol Shoot—Badlands Gun Range (1600 W. Russell Street—Sioux Falls)
Sept 8-10—PVA Trap Shoot—Crooks Gun Club—Sioux Falls
Sept 11—Doug Brown Memorial Pheasant Hunt (Top Gun Hunting Ranch—Howard)
Sept 11—VA Black Hills Mental Health Summit
Sept 13—Women Veterans Art Exhibit Open House—Watertown Elks Lodge—600 E. Kemp Ave—4:00 pm
Sept 14—Watertown Veterans/First Responders Appreciation Day—SD Army National Guard, BG Ernie Edwards Readiness Center
Sept 22 Homeless Veterans Stand Down—VFW Post—Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)
Sept 24—Gold Star Mothers Day
Sept 25-28 National Women Veterans Art Exhibit—VA Sioux Falls
Sept 25-26—Aim to Win—Hunters Pointe Shooting Complex—Humboldt
Sept 29—Women Veterans Conference—Central Baptist Church—Sioux Falls
Oct 6-8—Fall VFW Conference—Oacoma—Cedar Shores
Oct 7—Homecomings for VFW State Commander Williamson and VFW State Auxiliary President Alm—Cedar Shores—Oacoma—6:00 pm (CT)
Nov 4—Public Agent Orange Forum—Meade County Court House in Sturgis (2nd Floor Commissioners Chambers—1300 Sherman Street) 9:00 am and 1:00 pm (MT)
Nov 9-13—VFW Disabled Veterans Hunt—Gettysburg
Nov 11-12—Sea of Goodwill Equine Experience Retreat—Joy Ranch—Watertown

2018

Jan 28-29—VFW Legislative Conference—Ft. Pierre
Feb 16-18 American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

